



Childhood Connections

January 7, 2025

Happy New Year!

As we begin a new year, it is time for reflection and to reset. For the Office of Childhood, that means reflecting on the first four years since announcing this new office in 2021. There have been some big challenges and big wins along the way. Throughout 2025 we will spend time evaluating what worked and what didn't work, as well as engaging more with stakeholders and professionals, as we reset our goals and activities for the next four years.

Throughout 2025, this newsletter will spotlight team members who work in the Office of Childhood and their "why" for supporting children, families, and the professionals who work directly with them. To kick off the first edition, here is an introduction to the Assistant Commissioner and the three Program Administrators in the office.



Pam Thomas is the Assistant Commissioner of the office. She works closely with the Program Administrators, Executive Assistants, and the Outreach team to set the vision and goals for the office. Pam has worked in early childhood for 22 years. Her first job was helping children with disabilities and their families find services, which led to being a team leader, trainer, and administrator. Her "why" comes from being a young mom needing to find resources for her own sons and wanting all families with young children to get the resources and services they need.

Lisa Ivy is the Early Learning Program Administrator. Lisa works with the Home Visiting, the Early Intervention, and the Quality Programs teams. Quality Programs include professional development, Quality Assurance Report, afterschool, and public preschool. Lisa has worked with children and families for 23 years. Her years have



been spent helping ensure children's safety and well-being through roles in child abuse and neglect prevention (Children's Division), child care licensing, and as an Assistant Director with Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Her "why" is being driven by a commitment to protecting children and supporting families so every child can have a safe and nurturing environment.



Nancy Scherer is the Child Care Program Administrator. She works with the Child Care Relief Funds, the Child Care Regulations, and the Compliance teams. Nancy has spent her career protecting the health and safety of children. Her career began in a child care center as a teacher and she later became a director in a licensed child care center before moving to state government. Her "why" comes from being on all sides, as a child care worker, a parent, and a state worker. Nancy strives to ensure that her work is in the best interest of providers without compromising the health and safety of children.

Bryon Seboldt is the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Administrator. He works with the Child Care Subsidy program and the implementation of the Missouri CCDF State Plan. Bryon has worked in State government for over 10 years and began working with the Office of Childhood in September 2022 with Child Care Relief Funds. His "why" comes from being raised by a low-income single mother and understanding the importance of implementing a subsidy program that supports continuity of care for



Missouri's most vulnerable children and families.

NEW! Achieve DESE Quality Designation



Join the nearly 400 early childhood centers, early childhood centers, school district preschool programs, and licensed family-child care programs who are currently participating in Missouri's Quality Assurance Report (QAR) to achieve a DESE Quality Designation for their program.

The QAR is a statewide program committed to demonstrating why quality matters every day. Participants receive Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)© assessments, one on one coaching, access to quality supports and resources, and a training opportunity for staff interested in obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. Early learning programs can apply at any time during the year and will be contacted once space is available to actively begin the program. Visit [the QAR webpage](#) for program information.

Programs interested in joining may fill out [the QAR Program application](#).



News & Updates

UPDATE! Office of Childhood Contact Information

Did you know OOC publishes a printable [Contact Us](#) document that includes the phone numbers and email addresses for every program administered by OOC?

This page was recently updated with current contact information.

NEW! Early Childhood State Advisory Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC) will be held virtually on Tuesday, January 23, 2025, at 12:30 p.m.

The agenda is posted now and related presentation materials

NEW! 50 Years of IDEA

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Since 1975 much has been accomplished for this nation's infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

For nearly five decades, IDEA has positively transformed the educational experiences and opportunities for children with disabilities. Prior to the enactment of IDEA in 1975, there was no national obligation for states and school districts to educate children with disabilities. At that time, U.S. schools educated only one in five children with disabilities, and many states had laws excluding certain children from public schools, such as those who were deaf, blind, had emotional and/or behavioral needs, or had an intellectual disability.

Now, nearly 70 percent of children with disabilities spend 80 percent or more of their school day in the general education classroom, learning alongside their peers without disabilities.

Learn more about IDEA from Missouri's IDEA Parent Training and Information Center (MPACT).

ANNOUNCEMENT! MOPD Stakeholder Engagement

The OOC Professional Development team conducted several stakeholder engagement events in the summer and fall of 2024. These engagements were held to learn what was working well and what challenges or struggles staff and directors were experiencing after one year of using Missouri Professional Development (MOPD). The Professional Development team also gathered new ideas for enhancements to the system. A report has been compiled and is available on [the Early Connections webpage](#).

Several requested improvements are coming to the MOPD system in early 2025 to make it more user-friendly, especially when using a mobile device. The Professional Development team plans to release an updated version of MOPD in February 2025 addressing some of the items identified.

will be posted on [the ECSAC meeting webpage](#) approximately one week before the meeting.

NEW! 2024 Accomplishments in OOC

Last year was a year full of accomplishments in the Office of Childhood (OOC). The OOC supported the workforce through scholarships and apprenticeships. Activities including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri and developmental screenings helped prepare children for school.

[Learn about all of the OOC's 2024 accomplishments here.](#)

UPDATE! Childhood Community Leaders Information

OOC updated its [childhood community leaders webpage](#) with contact information for the leaders in several regions.

Childhood community leaders are local leaders in every part of the state that develop and implement strong community plans aimed at ensuring all families with young children can access high-quality programs, services, and resources in their communities.

OOC staff will continue to provide monthly MOPD updates in the Childhood Connections newsletter and share new information on the [MOPD webpage](#).

NEW! ARPA Close Out Report

OOC closed out the last federal child care relief grant. A report of the activities and funding is now available for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Discretionary funds distributed by OOC between September 2022 and October 2024.

Over \$277 million were distributed, in direct payments to child care providers and in activities to improve the quality of child care. To learn more, review the [final ARPA Discretionary Close Out Report](#).

NEW! Subsidy Provider Contract Checklists

Recently, OOC updated the [Child Care Subsidy Providers webpage](#) with new checklists to help explain the process of becoming a new subsidy provider or renewing a subsidy contract.

- The updated webpage has three tabs for how to become a child care subsidy provider, renew a subsidy contract, and complete subsidy training requirements.
- Each tab has information organized by provider type (i.e., licensed, license-exempt and six or fewer) and required forms (i.e., e-verify, no tax due letter, contract terms and conditions).

NEW! Sample Policy Manual for Subsidy Providers

The child care subsidy contract [Terms and Conditions](#) under Section 2.35 require providers to have a *Provider Policy Manual* that addresses how the provider is meeting federal health and safety standards.

- Beginning in January 2025, Compliance Inspectors working with exempt and license-exempt providers who take subsidy will begin reviewing the facility's *Provider Policy Manual* during the on-site inspections.
- OOC staff developed a [sample policy manual](#) to assist providers with meeting this federal

NEW! Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Webinar

OOC staff are hosting a webinar series to share child care-specific information with stakeholders and child care providers related to [Missouri's CCDF State Plan for 2025-2027](#).

The next CCDF Webinar will be on Wednesday February 19, 2025, from 11:00 to 11:45 a.m. Watch for a link and instructions coming soon to listen live.

Learn more about Missouri's CCDF State Plan for 2025-2027 at the [OOC CCDF webpage](#).

ANNOUNCEMENT! On-demand Training about Trauma Informed Care Available Now

The Missouri Department of Mental Health has developed free, on-demand trainings about trauma informed care. Staying informed on the impact of trauma in public service helps prevent that trauma from affecting the professional and personal lives of professionals.

This course is self-paced and free to access by making an account at the [Trauma Informed Care for Helping Professionals webpage](#).

requirement. Providers can review and use this sample policy when going through the process to become a new subsidy provider or when renewing the subsidy contract. The policy is listed under both of these sections on [the Child Care Subsidy Provider webpage](#).

ANNOUNCEMENT! 2025 Conference on the Young Years Registration Open



Registration is now open for the 52nd Annual Conference on the Young Years (CYY) which will be held March 6-8, 2025, at the Tan-Tar-A Conference Center in Osage Beach, Missouri.

Learn more about the conference and register to attend on [the CYY webpage](#).

REMINDER! 2025 Powerful Learning Conference Registration Open

The Powerful Learning Conference provides professional learning to help educators implement effective, evidence-based practices that aim to improve learning for every student in every school district.

Registration is now open for the 2025 Powerful Learning Conference.

The conference will be held February 2-4, 2024, at Tan-Tar-A Conference Center in Osage Beach, MO.

Visit the Powerful Learning webpage to view the conference brochure and to register.

REMINDER!
Imagination Library
Registration is Open

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is now available for every child ages birth to 5 years in Missouri. A parent or guardian can register their child on [the Imagination Library national webpage](#). Books will be mailed directly to the home of registered children at no cost to the family.

Learn about Imagination Library enrollment in your area by [visiting our Imagination Library webpage](#).

Monthly MOPD Quick Tip

For licensed child care programs: Did you know that clock hour compliance is calculated automatically for users in licensed programs. If a staff member has not completed an MOPD System Membership, calculation for compliance cannot occur. If a user did not complete the required number of clock hours in a previous year, the system automatically applies completed hours to the prior year(s) of employment until the user has met their required hours. Once in compliance with previous years, the system will begin calculating clock hours for the current year. If a course is repeated within the calendar year, credit will only be counted the first time it was taken.

To see clock hour compliance calculation, individuals should view their 'My Professional Development Learning Record' report, and organizations should view their 'Staff Report'.

See [the full MOPD instructions for reports](#) or read more about [licensing rules for training](#).

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships in order to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.



Photo Credit: Potosi R-3 Parents as Teachers

Partners in the Potosi R-3 School District recently shared about their frequent collaborations to help district families with young children find and access services. They have been working to provide information regarding programs such as First Steps, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Also, they work to connect families with resources such as local public health agencies, food pantries, and other community services.

Through these partnerships and their work together, these groups assist families by providing resources for ECSE, assisting in referrals for First Steps, and helping access information about community programs such as diaper banks. Potosi Parents as Teacher personalizes support based on families' needs. This allows them to remain flexible with where they meet families for visits and provide support when requested and encouragement when needed.

Potosi Parents as Teachers parent education program uses developmental screenings to connect families with early intervention services when needed. In the last several months, they were able to provide assistance on a First Steps referral that resulted in quick, dedicated next steps for the family. In that same time period, they were also able to provide car seat safety training. They collaborate with families to set meaningful goals and utilize their partnerships with other programs to help families meet those goals successfully.

These collaborative efforts highlight the commitment of Potosi R-3 School District Parents as Teachers, ECSE, First Steps, and other groups to ensure that

families are receiving the information and support they need to make decisions that are best for them and their young children.

Sharon Gibson, Parent Educator with Potosi Parents as Teachers said, "The collaboration with Parents as Teachers, First Steps, ECSE, and partnerships with other groups in our community has been a good fit for the families that we serve. Families have enjoyed not only visits with Parents as Teachers and First Steps but have also appreciated the connections with other resources that these partnerships have fostered."

FINAL REMINDER: Preschool Development Grant



The Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) provided funding from 2020-2024 to coordinate a more effective, high-quality early childhood system that better prepares Missouri children for success. Although this funding ended, OOC continues to update stakeholders on related activities.

Each month, the OOC hosted a live webinar to provide updates and information about the PDG B-5 to stakeholders. A [recording](#) and the [PowerPoint slides](#) from the November 2024 webinar are available in case you were unable to attend and wish to hear the information. You can view archived webinars here:

- [October 2024](#)
- [September 2024](#)
- [August 2024](#)
- [July 2024](#)
- [June 2024](#)
- [May 2024](#)
- [April 2024](#)

OOC Monthly Webinar

Join us for the next OOC Stakeholder webinar on **Tuesday, January 28, 2025**, from noon to 12:45 p.m. to learn more and ask questions. You can [access the webinar](#) in a Google Chrome or Safari web browser. Do not view in Internet Explorer. We hope you can participate!

For questions about the stakeholder webinar series, or suggestions for topics in future webinars, email us at Childhood@dese.mo.gov.

Archived Editions of Childhood Connections

Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.

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